

**PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
STAFF REPORT
October 17, 2006**

SUBJECT: Tentative Tract Map 32814
Site Plan 2004-01

PURPOSE: Subdivision of a 27 acre site into 11 individual lots and subsequent development of proposed parcel 1 and proposed gas parcel with a Wal-Mart Supercenter and free standing gas station, respectively.

LOCATION: At the southwest corner of the intersection of Hobsonway and Intake Blvd. (U.S. 95) in the City of Blythe, Riverside County, California - Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 854-090-009, -010, -011, -014, -015, -018, -019, 854-110-005, -008 and -009.

APPLICANT: Nasland Engineering
4740 Ruffner Street
San Diego CA 92111

AGENT: Michael Navarro
Navarro Retail Group
28202 Cabot Road Ste 300
Laguna Niguel CA 92677

OWNER: Michele Ausserbauer
PO Box 559
Solvang CA 93464

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE/ZONING DESIGNATION: The subject site is currently zoned CG (General Commercial) with General Plan Designations of CT (Tourist Commercial) and CG (General Commercial). The proposed uses are allowed by right in the General Commercial zone.

SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USES:

NORTH: CG (General Commercial), RML (Medium/Low Density Residential), RL1 (Low Density Residential) – Commercially zoned properties occupied by commercial and residential uses, residentially zoned properties with scattered single family dwellings, Chanslorway;

SOUTH: CG (General Commercial), RML (Medium/Low Density Residential) - Interstate 10, commercial properties in agricultural production, high- and low-density residential development, 14th Avenue;

EAST: CG (General Commercial), PD (Planned Development), R/MH (Residential Mobile Home), SPR (Specific Plan Resort) – Commercially zoned properties occupied by commercial and residential uses, residentially zoned properties with scattered single family dwellings; East Side Drain; and,

WEST: IS (Service Industrial), CG (General Commercial), RML (Medium/Low Density Residential), R/MH (Residential Mobile Home), CG (General Commercial) – Vacant and occupied commercial and industrial properties, Cottonwood Lane residential community, Burtons Trailer Park, vacant commercial properties, Agate Road.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Eastern Gateway Retail Center site consists of 27 acres located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Hobsonway and Intake Blvd. (U.S. 95). The site is currently vacant and disturbed. A closed gas station is located immediately adjacent to the project site at the southwest corner of Hobsonway and Intake Blvd. and is not a part of the project. Entitlement components for the Proposed Project include an 11 lot tentative tract map and approval of the site plan for the Wal-Mart anchor parcel and Wal-Mart service station parcel.

The Eastern Gateway Retail Center is proposed to be anchored by a 175,000 square foot Wal-Mart Supercenter. The maximum allowable and proposed height of the building would be 34 feet. The lot at the northeastern corner of the project site is approximately 0.71 acres in size and is proposed to be developed as a freestanding gas station with 12-pumps and an attendant booth. Although no specific end uses or tenants have been identified at this time, the remaining nine parcels would be available for use as various retail-commercial purposes. Said purposes were analyzed in the environmental document based on the assumptions that potential uses may include fast food, service stores, a bank and other similar uses up to 64,500 s.f. and 8,000 s.f. of restaurant uses.

The Proposed Project includes the construction of a Wal-Mart Supercenter with appurtenant structures on the Wal-Mart parcel. The store is anticipated to include general retail merchandise, groceries and liquor, pharmacy with a drive-up service window, a vision and hearing care center, a food service center, a photo studio, a photo finishing center, a banking center, arcade, outdoor sale area, outside container storage, proprietary rooftop satellite communication facilities (which will be screened from public view) and a garden center. The Supercenter would also include a Tire and Lube Express that will perform minor vehicle servicing such as tire changes, battery replacement and general fluid service. The Wal-Mart Supercenter is proposed to operate up to 24-hours per day, seven days per week.

Generally, all of the uses would be located within the boundaries of the store or screened garden center. The Wal-Mart parcel will have approximately 735 parking spaces to meet the City's parking requirements and will also include a designated Recreational Vehicle parking area. Overnight parking is allowed for up to 12 hours pursuant to the Blythe Municipal Code.

The Proposed Project will include a detention/retention basin along the eastern and southern boundaries of the site to collect and drain storm water from the entire 27-acre site.

Water and waste water service will be provided to the site via existing infrastructure in Hobsonway and Intake Blvd. respectively.

Access to the site will be provided via four access points, one on Intake Blvd., and three on Hobsonway. All out-lots will be accessed through the internal circulation system and no additional access points will be allowed on either Hobsonway or Intake Blvd..

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: Because the City Council will consider the approval of the Land Use and Development Permit, the City is required to evaluate environmental impacts of the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City of Blythe has had prepared a Revised Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Eastern Gateway Retail Center that meets the requirements of the State of California CEQA, the State CEQA Guidelines, and the City of Blythe Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA. In preparing the Revised Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report, staff independently reviewed, evaluated and exercised judgement of the Project and the Project's environmental effects.

Issues analyzed in the Revised Recirculated Draft EIR included: Aesthetics / Visual Resource; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology / Soils; Hydrology / Drainage / Water Quality; Land Use; Noise; Public Health, Safety and Hazardous Materials; Public Services and Utilities; Socioeconomics; and, Transportation / Circulation.

Issues considered and then dismissed from further analysis in the document included: Agricultural Resources; Mineral Resources; Population and Housing; and, Recreation.

Potentially significant impacts were identified in the following resource areas and mitigation measures have been designed and are included in the Revised Recirculated Draft EIR to reduce to below a level of significance or eliminate those potentially significant impacts for: Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Geology and Soils; Hydrology / Drainage / Water Quality; Public Safety and Hazards; Public Services and Utilities; and, Traffic and Circulation.

Air Quality impacts were determined to be significant and unavoidable as were noise impacts.

Alternatives were evaluated in the Draft EIR and the Recirculated Revised Draft EIR, based on two criteria. First, the alternative must avoid or substantially lessen an identified significant effect of the Proposed Project; and second, the alternative must feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives. Alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIR and Recirculated Revised Draft EIR included:

- *No Project Alternative* (required by CEQA) – The No Project Alternative assumes that the Proposed project would not be built at the site. However, this Alternative does not assume that the site would remain vacant in perpetuity because of the location of the site within a high growth corridor in a growing City. Under this alternative it is assumed that development of the project site would ultimately occur, at some time in the future, with permitted uses under the current zoning designation of C-G and general plan designation of C-G and C-T in the future.
- *Wal-Mart Supercenter Only Alternative* – The Wal-Mart Supercenter Only Alternative assumes development of the site, with the current proposed 175,000 square foot as a “stand-alone” Wal-Mart, on the 27-acre site. This would only allow for the 175,000 square foot Wal-Mart Supercenter and assumes that the other remaining parcels available for future retail-commercial purposes would not be built at this time.
- *Reduced Intensity Alternative* – The Reduced Intensity Alternative assumes the same location as the Proposed Project, but with a smaller 90,000 square foot Wal-Mart. This alternative would still assume a new retail center with the same total number of lots but with reduced square footage for the main lot and all other parcels would be developed at half of the allowable intensity.

The resulting alternatives analysis shows that the Reduced Intensity and Wal-Mart Supercenter Only alternatives would result in three impacts that are less than the Proposed Project with the remainder of the impacts the same as the project. However, these two alternatives did not meet the General Plan goals and/or project objectives, while the Proposed Project does meet the General Plan goals and project objectives.

FINDINGS:

- A. The proposed Tentative Tract Map is consistent with the General Plan and requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
- B. The Proposed Project is consistent with the regulations, guidelines, programs, goals, objectives, policies and land uses contained in the Comprehensive General Plan.
- C. The Proposed Project is consistent with the requirements of Chapter 17 of the Blythe Municipal Code.
- D. The site is physically suitable for the type and density of development proposed.
- E. The design of the project or the proposed public improvements will not conflict with easement or public right-of-way acquired by the public at large within or adjacent to the project site.
- F. An Environmental Impact Report, in accordance with the CEQA was prepared for the Project.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Planning Commission, subsequent to the public hearing thereon, recommend to the City Council:

- A. Consider the Revised Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report and the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Eastern Gateway Retail Center for Certification; and,
- B. Approval of Tentative Tract Map 32814 and approval of Site Plan 2004-01, with conditions.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Land Use and Zoning Map
- B. Tentative Tract Map 32814
- C. Site Plan 2004-01
- D. Conditions of Approval

Respectfully Submitted:

Jennifer L. Wellman
Planning Director